

HAUNTED HERITAGE

and other stories

ALBERT WILLIAMS



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Baltimore

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Dedicated to
my son, Isaiah Williams
in whom I am well pleased

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Sincerely

Albert Williams
Bognor Regis
August 2005.

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G O D D E S S

for
VIGILINE

-1-

life
we
must once hold

realms to
the
prelude of death

preferences we
should
hold none

-2-

when love
is
true

it is
blacker
than

midnight

-3-

among the trees you are the greenest

between the flowers you are the prettiest

among the poems you are the sweetest

between the songs you are the loveliest

among the rocks, the one I lean on

between the sunset, the day I long for

among the birds the one who flies highest

between the stars the one that sparkles

-4-

how lonesome you are in that
warm blue ecstasy
warmer than a first
kiss on valentines .
this crescent curve
the joy of my days, your sweet
respite more desirable
than the sun at its zenith

-5-

oh, pretty little flower
little tender rose
how resplendent you are
in this broken vase

for my true love
where she may give
you water

that when she sees you
smiling she remembers
how heaven really is

-6-

in the re-awakening
we discover ourselves
besides the face
of the 21st century
upon her raft in the ocean
drawn into the bosom
of the watery earth
until
my twilight zone

-7-

for the joy that she brings to me

for the attractiveness that attracts me

for that cute little smile

for that queenly bearing

for her understanding

for her elegance

for the love that flows

for the intelligence

for her delightful nose

for the etiquette

i'll always be true to her

-8-

she's a flower that blooms

every hour

my blazing anthurium

her tassels flicker

violet and amber

against my verdure stem

summer zephyrs chills

our trembling attire

leaving trails onwards

-9-

here
she
comes
swaying
upon
a melody
so
gracefully
finally
we
join
in
rev
el
r

-10-

kneeling before her presence

my altar of flesh

together we offer this innocence

-11-

my fountain, my beloved

her heart an open book

our light illuminates our dream world

overlooking scott's head

she reads our favorite poems

-12-

then
we fell free from fear
that this sudden descent
would end
in an
emerald pool
that our day
dreams
are made of

-13-

and
then
time
was
swept
from under our feet
where nature once reigned
green and
supreme
kissed
our hungry eyes
on
moon-less nights
mountains stand stripped
tawny
as
mahogany
rivers
now dry as sticks

-14-

that morning we woke
to another day as if it
was creation morning
the
sun shone shining golden
just for us
we felt its ebullience
for the first time

-15-

waves
breaking
on
her
face
clouds
floating
in
my
eyes

-16-

records and novels

cups and saucers

streams bubbling

over rocks, to the

arms of my beloved

-17-

listen!

how she tells of
mankind
why the moon goes round
the earth
because jah made little girls
from spring
but little boys from surf

-18-

we thought to boast of
our special friend
ever so sweet. Sweeter

to us than our skin
ever so sweet

nearer to us than
our shadow

ever so close

we thought to boast of
our special friend

-19-

in
perfect solitude
the self
dives
into
the self
this peace, this serenity
blessed are
you
children of God.

-20-

she requesting
poems of friendship
speaking the
language of the kingdom of love

I with wistful face

yet

brighter than bright

meander through

little poems

-21-

behind the rain-forest
lies a genuine soul trading
counterfeits for sweet little lies
such honesty from a captive spirit
an imprisoned spirit
an imprisoned self yearning to release
from this human jungle

mortal biped chained to a lamp post
squatting in shafts of immortal light
we witness victims of their own deceits

-22-

the heart that knows depths of love
may never be deceived
no matter what befalls the heart
it softly onwards proceeds
beneath the reefs, through rugged rocks
beset by sudden storms and gales
for only they who truly love
may survive these joyful pains

-23-

some crave experience

plunged into death-traps

only
the sagacious escape
some
fabricate alibis

encountering maxims in
crushed hearts

waiting endlessly

to release the law

to set the life-blood
free

-24-

can one purchase friendship
save it for a rainy day
do friendships forgive and forget
endure all things without regret?

-25-

i'm all alone
just i and I
maybe
because that fate
has alighted on me
i
wonder
what goes on in
your juvenile mind
for indeed
i
know
you are all alone
too

-26-

my loving respect that's all
i want to give
forget your troubles tonight
it's price is high above justice
forget your riches tonight
place your bodies right next to mine
forget your privacy tonight
come let's build a home together
forget your loneliness tonight

-27-

i beloved and i
listen to the power of
the wind's triumphant
serenade
as we linger
for the final climax
we kiss
then
turn our
backs on yesterday

-28-

without her
i can do nothing
without her
my spirit is weak
without her
a fish out of water is safer than me
without her
i am a lost continent
without her
days are kilometers of sand
without her
evenings grow colder
without her
this life is a snare

-29-

the
burden with
youth
is

that we hardly perceive
until enlightenment dawns

-30-

i
man
born of woman
a
sugar apple
invented from the steak of
an angel's breast
wings
of one bird soaring
heaven-ward
a
single hand
stretches forth
touching
the
sacred

HAUNTED HERITAGE

By Albert Williams

CHAPTER ONE

The ginger bread fretwork was still as she remembered; it ran along each window frame like a green iguana. As a child her father had recounted to her the story of how the two story wooden building had become family property, purchased by her aunt, an obscure novelist, from a white plantation owner who left the island in quite a hurry following the abolition of slavery and the subsequent emancipation of the slaves. When Margaret trunk and her husband arrived, they'd let themselves in through the front door.

"Leah!" Margaret called out in the open space.

"Maybe she not at home," coughed her husband.

"At least she knew that we were coming," she replied. Margaret took Phillip by the hand and slowly took him to the kitchen where they found Leah turned towards the

sink in the deft preparation of a huge Mountain Chicken that still kicked in frequent spasms as she patiently removed the entrails. She was about seventy-five, of African descent and was probably deaf.

“There you are, “ Margaret said.

Leah spun around dropping the calabash of dissected frog. “ Oh I didn’t mean to scare you!” Margaret apologized as she stooped to retrieve the delicacy.”

“What did you say? Speak up I’m short of hearing, you know.” Leah said, and then focused her attention on Phillip who up until now had not said anything other than gasp at the quivering wild life.

“And who is that?” Leah asked eyeing him with a mixture of hostility and curiosity.

“Eh, eh, I find you something else, in my father’s own house, I think you must have forgotten something, don’t you.”

At this Leah sucked hard on her teeth, then said, “You know that...”

“That what...that I’m not welcome here!” Margaret screamed.

“That’s it, “Phillip said at last,”I told you to let the old maid have the old house. You have everything you could hope for in England. “Phillip was all reddish in the face

and he twitched his nose continually. "I'm on the next plane back to England." Phillip was obviously mad with rage.

"So you didn't even want to see your father before he died." Leah's dark face registered an utter dislike for Margaret and her English husband.

"Leah" said Margaret as she stepped towards her.

"Don't touch me" she said in patois, your just another ungrateful child, seventeen years and not even a visit, just leave me alone "she said as she reverted to English to the relief of Phillip. "Just leave me alone," Leah cried between the sobs.

For a moment Margaret felt as if the ground had melted beneath her feet. The realization struck her that coming home was not off to a very good start.

CHAPTER TWO

The evening was hot and sticky, not even a wisp of air filtered through the building. Margaret tossed and turned, settling down to a good night's sleep after a long tiring sea journey was proving to be extremely difficult. In the stillness, however, it wasn't only the incessant drone of the mosquitoes that kept Margaret awake. "Phillip," She whispered as she pushed against her husband's arm.

"Phillip," she said again this time a little louder. Phillip slowly stirred from the depths of sleep.

"What is it honey?" he asked.

"Listen, can't you hear it?"

"I can't hear a thing except for those blasted bugs. It must be the spirit of the West Indies getting to you."

“I swear, as if I heard some one using...”

“Aw you’re just imagining things.” The husband said turning on his side like a great whale. He finally convinced his wife that it perhaps a nightmare that she had experienced and soon she had drifted off into a flat black land with no features.

Hours later the sun rose with blinding heat, golden beams shot through the dining room flooding it with it’s warmth and wry humor. It was a Tuesday, just turned 7:30 am. Margaret, Phillip and Leah were sitting in the dinning room discussing the events of the past evening.

Leah expressed shock to learn of tapping on the roof. She said that she had lived in the house for 36 years and she had never heard any tapping.

“Well, last night I heard tapping as if someone was using a typewriter,”

“Tap tapping on the roof, uh!” Phillip said exasperated. “Perhaps it’s the after effects of losing a loved on,” He offered.

“That’s strange,” Margaret mused.

“I honestly think you should see a doctor.” Phillip coughed slightly.

“Honey, do you think I’m losing my mind?”

"No, not at all, but darling you seem to be so restless these last few days. You perspire profusely at nights, and talk to yourself quite a bit. Some times it frightens me."

"True!" exclaimed Leah.

"She scares me out of my wits," Phillip said laughing.

Margaret listened unbelievably, and was even begin to brush it off as a bad experience. Perhaps it was the long two-month journey at sea that had taken it's toll on her, "yes maybe it is," she reasoned to her self.

Meanwhile, Leah had excused herself and had gone to the kitchen. She returned minutes later carrying a wooden tray; " I've prepared some thing for all you...Margaret, I sure you have eaten this in a long time." She carried in a tray with two large enamel cups loaded with steaming cocoa tea, the strong pungent aroma of vanilla very evident. "If you want the rest of the breakfast, then don't just sit there," she said glaring at Phillip as if he was a school child.

Phillip not quite sure what he should do, nevertheless obeyed and stomped over to the kitchen. He returned shortly carrying a large wooden tray, this time laden with slices of roast breadfruit and smoked herring. "What's this?" Phillip asked baffled not sure what he had been so rudely asked to bring in.

"It's a traditional recipe," replied His wife.

“You Dominicans are always coming up with new ways to surprise me,” he replied. Smoked herring never heard of it “

“Anyway,” butted in the maid, “the lawyer coming this afternoon to read the will.”

“Of course, the will...yes the will,” responded Margaret. “Why don’t we go for a walk in the village, Phillip? By the time we come back we will be all ready to receive this lawyer.”

“Good idea let’s get some fresh air,” he said as he brushed the tip of his long white nose with an equally long index finger. He took his wife by the hand and without another look at Leah stepped out into the Tuesday morning.

The warm currents of the salty Atlantic wafted in from the bay as the couple strode past a dozen or so fishermen; some preparing their nets and boats for another day’s expedition, others were hauling in the canoes filled with flying fish. They followed the rough unpaved road and soon arrived at the government school. The couple paused for about an hour watching a group of girls playing netball on the adjoining hard court.

“Phillip, I think we better hurry back home, we’ve an appointment, remember.”

“Of course,” Phillip said.

Margaret seemed to be in high spirits as she approached the family home. “It was my father who taught me how to feed the chickens, and how to plant vegetables in the back yard,” she reminisced. Just then Margaret stumbled and seemed to be fainting.

“Is something wrong?” Phillip asked. But Margaret only groaned as she fell to the ground foaming at the mouth, as her body jerked and writhed. “Leah! Leah!” he shouted. The maid had been at the kitchen window and saw Margaret fall. “Call a doctor Margaret must be suffering some sort of seizure sure.

“But we do have a phone!”

“Then do something quick!”

“Leah hobbled out of the house as fast as she could, then down the street, across the market square where she met Otis, a bus driver who transported her to Dr. Alston’s home somewhere among the maze of cluttered houses that made up the landscape of the town.

CHAPTER THREE

“Let me see now,” the doctor was a short-bearded man with a shining bronze head and a tuft for a mustache. His brown-colored suit had an odor as if it had not been dry-cleaned for years. Dr Alston was reading the gauge of his blood-pressure reading apparatus. “You seem to be in fair condition,” he nodding to Phillip with an air of professionalism.

“My wife was fine up until we returned to this God-forsaken place!” Phillip said.

“God forsaken, Lord no!” Exclaimed the doctor raising his eyebrows in a comical manner. “We are ninety percent Catholic, and we adore the saints.” He said and broke into a long discourse on the hagiography of the Catholic saints, even reciting a list of the saints one for each day of the week. “Are you a Catholic?” he asked Phillip suddenly.

"I never cared much for church, but I believe in God, but now tell me about my wife!" Phillip said raising his voice a decibel or two in irritation.

"I think Mrs. Trunk should be given a lot of rest at this time" said the doctor."

"Yes Doc." Phillip replied. He was stroking Margaret's head ever so gently as she gradually came round.

"Ooh!" She said

"It's alright honey, I'm right here." Phillip assured her, as he helped her to sit upright. He explained the events of the last two hours to her as she listened feebly.

"I feel...I feel...as if I've visited....,"she muttered. Margaret seemed to have difficulty speaking,"as if...a strange place." She squinted her eyes now her gaze fixed on her husband Phillip. "There was this lady in a white dress...what if it is not done?"

"If what is not done?" asked the doctor.

"I think my wife needs the rest that you spoke of, doctor," Phillip whispered.

"I think so too," replied the doctor Alston.

Leah at this time was administering some pungent smelling alcohol to Margaret's forehead as the doctor and Phillip withdrew from the room. Doctor Alston had

a worried look on his face, “ your wife may be suffering a serious nervous breakdown...I think that she should see a psychiatrist.”

“Are you saying that my wife is a nut?”

“I’m not going that far, but...”

“This whole thing is stranger than fiction,” Phillip said with exasperation.

“You know, it’s a common problem with returned nationals from England, they seem to lose it,” he said pointing to his temples. At the suggestions a peal of laughter broke out from behind the row of hibiscus trees that lined the flower garden lawn. An old man leaning on stick, two schoolgirls and another middle-aged woman clutching a bag of groceries who was fortunate to be passing by as the incident were happening. However, they quickly disappeared when the stony glance of both the doctor and Phillip beamed in their direction. In the distance you could hear the two schoolgirls giggling.

“What are they laughing?” Phillip thought to himself, he shook his head at the doctor who eyed Phillip sympathetically.

CHAPTER FOUR

The appointment with the lawyer was postponed for the following day although the doctor advised that Margaret was not well enough to give attention to such a matter. However, Phillip later agreed it and Leah that Margaret needed this to be over as soon as possible.

Mrs. James and her husband arrived at 10 Long Lane, at exactly 3 pm according to plan. Margaret was still recovering from the odd incident yesterday when the couple arrived, announced by a loud rapping on the door.

“All right, I coming, I coming,” Leah shouted over the banging as she cussed under her breath.

Mrs. James and her husband made a stately entrance. It was obvious that they had been made accustomed to being treated with a certain amount of awe. Without

invitation they proceeded to make themselves comfortable on the only two armchairs in sight. "The purpose of my visit as you are all aware," she began, "is to make known the final wishes of Stedman Ezekiel, as expressed in this the last will and testimony signed on the 15th of May 1969 and sealed with my own seal."

She smiled slightly as if she had offered a scrumptious lunch. "Firstly, I must inform you that his entire estate will go towards his only and closest of kin Margaret on one condition."

"One condition?" Margaret asked weakly.

"Yes, Mrs. Trunk, that you retain the services of Leah, who in his own words 'has served the family well for over forty years.' "

A deep silence fell on the room, and for a moment it seemed as if the world had stopped turning.

"Is there anything else?" Margaret asked.

"Actually there is," Miss James replied, "that if you were to relieve Leah of her duties that she should be compensated with a \$10,000 cash, severance pay."

"\$10,000 in cash?" gasped Phillip.

"That seems very much like it, Mrs. Trunk"

"But where I am I going to \$10,000 in cash? Margaret asked, as she slumped in her chair. She felt as if a frog was trying to get out of her throat.

"Your father had quite an inheritance, you know." The lawyer explained that Mr. Ezekiel had been very thrifty in his time and had also inherited quite a lot of wealth from his own father, but had never disclosed that to anyone but me," the lawyer said smugly.

"Well,"

"Well what, Leah?" Margaret asked

"I'll take the money," she said.

"What do you mean, I'll take the money...that's if I dismiss you."

"You doh has to dismiss me."

"Then you will lose everything," the lawyer butted in, "Mr.'s Trunk is now your new employer, and only if she decides to send you away is she obliged to honor her father's wishes."

"I'll see about dat!" the maid hissed, but she is in no condition to make a decision."

"Why is that?" the lawyer asked.

"I think that is enough. Thank you, Mrs. James," Phillip said suddenly springing to his feet.

“I think so too,” said the lawyer, “I think so too. I’ll let you all think about for a few days.” Mrs. James said.

Leah glared at Margaret.

“Good bye Mrs. Trunk, I hope to hear from you of your decision as soon as possible.” The lawyer said as she beat a hasty retreat to the door through which she had entered.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reagent Town was built along the River Zombie named after a maroon slave, or the negres maroons as they were referred to in the local parlance. It had become the industrial center of the island, but had retained its traditional ways of life. It was a town where everyone knew everyone else. It wasn't long before the town folk began to circulate rumors that another crazy woman was in Reagent. Mentally ill persons usually were the butt of cruel jokes and or did others regard other wise as being posed by the devil.

Days passed into weeks and things were not getting any better. Phillip was getting scared. He confided in the psychiatrist, Bronchial.

"Hmm, I think your wife needs all the emotional support that she can get from you," he said sternly.

"You think I should stay here and become a laughing stock," Phillip croaked. "So this is why you asked me out here to this restaurant so that you can spoon feed me this advice." Phillip began to shake uncontrollably.

"In the present circumstances, that is perhaps the best line of approach." the Doctor said as he stared at his palms. "I strongly suggest that you ask her to spend a few days at my clinic."

"At your clinic...Good Lord, what will the people say now?"

"Why should you worry what people say?"

"Doctor you must be out of your mind!" replied Phillip.

"I think," said the doctor," your wife may be suffering from deeply rooted guilt or may indeed be hearing voices from beyond the grave."

"Are you saying that my wife is hearing voices in her head?"

"Something like that...but she might be unwilling to yield to the spirit's power, as for this obsession to write?"

"It beats me, Phillip said.

* * *

Two weeks passed, on and off Margaret continued to exhibit unexplained behavior. One morning Phillip awake to find his wife writing on the walls of the bedroom with a piece of crayon.

"My dear," he interrupted quietly, "what is the meaning of this?" he asked politely.

"These are the words of my aunt."

"Your aunt, which aunt?"

"I will not have you questioning me like this in my father's house!" Margaret bellowed.

"OK, " Phillip replied shaken," but why write on the walls?"

"Because its important to read," she said as she seemed to be concentrating on her writing. She wrote quickly in tiny characters, legible to no one but herself.

"Honey, would it help if I bought you some paper and pens too, if that's what makes you happy?" Her husband asked.

"Leave me alone, Phillip. You know what you have to do!" she said and then dismissed him.

Phillip turned, hurt and crestfallen. He felt as if he had just been used, crumpled and trashed. But Margaret was his wife of 22 years. He loved and wanted to make her

happy, or if God Forbid, get as far away from her as he could. Phillip thought secretly, that he was beginning to get very embarrassed. Weeks passed and Phillip was kept busy supplying paper and bush tea to Margaret who wrote all day and even into the early hours of the morning.

CHAPTER SIX

“Honey, you haven’t rested for days and look at all that writing. But you never show any of it to me,” Phillip said baffled by Margaret incessant urge to write, and even more so by, by her refusal to allow him to read the material. “Are you writing a novel?” he asked.

“What a really stupid thing to ask!” she replied, “when you can see that for yourself.” Margaret had taken control of the bedroom and had made Phillip place the large dining room table in a corner of the room. She only tore herself away from her labors to answer nature calls and her occasional bush tea. It was a Monday morning, about 10:30 am when Phillip appeared at the doorway.

“Honey, there is a Mr. O’Neal and some students here to see you.”

“Did I ask for visitors?” she snarled in reply.

“He said that he is from the Regent Secondary School’s literature class...”

Margaret considered the request then consented. She seemed to be in a rare cooperative mood this morning. Her face though was pale and thin, and deep hollows housed her deep brown eyes.

Phillip led the visitors to the living room, providing seats for the children 3 girls and 2 boys who looked anxious to meet the mysterious writer. Margaret entered the room dressed in a long white evening gown, her hair tucked beneath a white towel.

“Mrs. Trunk, is it true that you are writing a novel?” asked the teacher, “

“If you call this writing a novel, then yes I am!”

“Have you published any of your work before?” one of the girls asked.

“What is this? Some kind of documentary?”

“These are students of the literature class, and we thought that it would be educational to have them chat a little with a real author,” the teacher said.

“Ah so you want to learn my secrets, my method of writing, my research capabilities,” replied Margaret crossly, adding, “I’m sorry, I don’t have time to answer your questions.” She paused for a moment, and stared

across the room eyeing each of the individuals in turn. "Thank you for coming. Phillip please makes sure that the guests leave, ok."

Phillip had no choice, but to comply. The teacher and the students left mumbling to themselves obviously not satisfied with the results of the field trip. But the larger rumor spread all the more, that the English Lady was posed with some kind of spirit and that she was involved with some kind of spirit writing.

Phillip and the psychiatrist were under constant verbal attack by members of the community, especially from the school children who regard her as a little unusual.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A week later, another quest appeared at the front door of the Williams' home, his name was Mr. Potter.

"I am Anthony Potter from Hard-line Publications, based in the United Kingdom." the man said.

"Are you serious?" Gasp'd Phillip

"Oh yes, we have heard that your wife is doing some splendid work."

"But how can you know that," Phillip asked.

"We have our methods," he smiled as he drew out some papers from his brief case, "If you would be so kind to review these documents, together with your wife. Here is my card." The gentleman left, his vehicle letting off a series of loud bangs and a trail of a carbon monoxide.

It suddenly dawned on Phillip that his wife was actually recognized as an author. He smiled slightly, and began to imagine all the attention he would be getting as the man behind the successful woman. His next problem was how was he to break the good news of the offer to Margaret. She was not really herself these last few days and even in her most cooperative moments, she was difficult to deal with. Still he felt deep inside that surely something would work out.

Margaret continued to write everyday, until one evening she lay on the bed next to Phillip, something she hadn't done for months.

"It is finished," she told him softly.

"What is finished?" Phillip asked half asleep.

"The book"

"Really, what's it called?"

"The River Clear Revelation."

"Ah! Is it a mystery novel?"

"You will have to read it, honey. But I need to get it published."

"Honey...that's easy. I know just the person to talk to."

HAUNTED HERITAGE AND OTHER STORIES

“Ok, then we’ll talk about it in the morning,” Margaret said a dozed off into a deep sleep.

THE END

I'VE SEEN IT ALL BEFORE

By Albert Williams

“Do I have to take another day of this?” an impatient Joel whispered in the ear of his schoolmate as he pressed his elbow deep into King’s ribs.

“Ouch! Watch what you’re doing!” King blurted out, his shrill voice cracking the grave-like silence of the quadrangle where his uncle, the Head teacher Mr. Hailstone, was addressing the assembly.

“You are the future of this country...and who was that?” Mr. Hailstone snapped in mid-sentence. He had been concentrating on giving his best speech before the visiting education inspector’s few words. He raised his head abruptly, peering through his spectacles in a manner that Joel thought gave him a predator appearance. “Who was it?” Mr. Hailstone asked again, this time moving away from the lectern.

The entire assemblage shuffled noisily, all eyes falling on Burton King. "Well Mr. King, will you please come out here to the dais?" King's face drained of its colour. Joel stared him in the face as he made his way through the rows of students, smartly dressed and well groomed.

"So, Mr. King," Mr. Hailstone was a very formal individual, a principal who took no nonsense from his students, "are you the one who so rudely interrupted me in your usual abominable manner?"

"Please proceed to my office," he said, "I will deal with you accordingly. The uncouth behaviour of the youth!" Mr. Hailstone sucked his teeth, childishly, cleared his throat

And adjusted his tie before resuming his introduction.

The visiting education officer was a large, fat, black man who sounded as if he had been thoroughly bred on a diet of Oxford grammar; while he was extolling the virtues of a sound education. Joel was lost deep in thought—what if, he mused, and King told his uncle that it was he who had purposely distracted him? What if he didn't? Either way a gloomy outcome was imminent he concluded. Joel scratched his head ruffling the little corkscrews that shot out from his brush-back, and then tore a page from his pocket book, which he always carried around with him. He hurriedly scribbled something on it then passed it on with a sly look on his face. Joel always had that look on his face when he was up to something. Before long a snigger rose up from a certain quarter of the gathered students as the unsuspecting,

visiting education officer ended his lecture. Mr. Hailstone was about to dismiss the students and staff when he caught sight of a student passing on Joel's mysterious missile.

"Ah! Excuse me young man," he said, "and what good tidings is this that you are so dutifully distributing among my students?"

"Nothing Mr. Hailstone," the frightened boy replied, "It's just a worthless piece of paper."

"Is that so!" responded Mr. Hailstone, "In that case I would be happy to have a read myself; here pass it to me." The Principal signalled to the Head boy who was President over the team of prefects.

Fifteen minutes later, the school was dismissed. Some girls held their breath as they passed Mr. Hailstone, others pondered on the fate of the two boys, King and Joel were not the most popular, but on the other hand they were not the least admired, Joel in particular had earned himself the reputation of being a shrewd prankster. Mr. Hailstone, nicknamed "the draught" was known to be a man with fondness for what he called compulsory, corporal punishment, necessary of the souls of straying and habitual miscreants could have any hope of social redemption.

When Joel entered the office Burton King was staring at a large framed photograph of an ancient looking Headmaster, a white man with a long drooping

moustache. It was on top a filing cabinet covered with an inch thick of dust. "What are you doing here?" King asked in alarm.

"I've come to save your butt from..."

Without warning Mr. Hailstone pushed open the office door and strode in rather elated. He even seemed to be smiling, a rare occurrence; stepping gracefully with his large brown hands concealed in the pocket of his tweed jacket. He sat down at his desk with a sigh, then stared at the ceiling and finally acknowledged the two boys standing like two wet chickens in front of him.

"Gentlemen," he began, "this may be your final year with us...I would like to think you would have received the basic skills to prepare you for the world of work, and even further education."

"Yes Sir," the boys replied.

"When I was your age," he demonstrated with his hand the exaggerated height of the boys, "we teenagers thought that we had the answers to the age-old problem of society; yes we were brash about it all."

Joel was miles away, hardly aware of the principal's soliloquy — what a bare! — He thought.

"...And do you that those students who took a deep interest and pride in their education fare better in life, they are better able to make meaningful contributions to society?" Mr. Hailstone was in an expansive mood, brain

now clicking in high gear. "I admire, mark you, some young people, particularly a select few of my students. They may be brash, but they've got the spirit of inquiry." He squinted his eyes behind the glare of his glasses. "To question the impossible, that is necessary to survive and achieve in this dog-eat-dog world," he affirmed. At this, he removed his glasses, wiped them with a sanitary napkin then placed them on his desk delicately in front of him. He was still smiling slightly.

King chocked back the tears welling up in the corner of his eyes, his thyroid gland felt miserable. It was the first time that he had ever witnessed his uncle speaks so compassionately to anyone, let alone himself. It was a side of his uncle he had never, in his wildest dreams, expected. King felt crushed by this sudden change of disposition.

"You are the future of this country," the headmaster continued. "I repeat, you are the future of this country, I can't ever emphasize this...in the next ten, twenty, thirty years from now, it will be students like you who will be the leaders of society."

"Can you imaging what life in the world will be like then?" Mr. Hailstone replaced his spectacles on his face. "Don't waste your time here. Gentlemen, there is much more knowledge that you will need to acquire than this institution can ever hope to offer, so make good use of the opportunity that your parents have gone to great sacrifices to provide. Youth fades quickly, like the tender flower that no sooner has its bloom then it fades in the heat of the day."

The teacher let the background static raise a level or two—passing students, the low growl of distant vehicles and the interminable ticking of the small alarm clock on his desk, he seemed to be in a self-induced trance-like daze.

“Mr. Hailstone!” Joel intervened, “Thanks for your advice and...”

“Actually, think nothing of it...I’m always on the look out for bright students like you, who take themselves seriously,” he replied with a wink.

Joel rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

“If only...Oh never mind!” Mr. Hailstone now seemed to be taking less interest in the two boys, and was reaching for a stack of cardboard files to his left. The clang of the period bell sounded, it was already 10.30am. “O.K then,” said the principal, “it’s time to dismiss you two, I’ve got a literature class.” He glanced through his timetable on the side of the filing cabinet...” Ah yes, Form 402 it is.” He then said in a low voice, “Try not to let something like this happen to you two again!”

The boys shrunk from the presence of the teacher, smiled, turned and left the office without another word, for fear that it was all a dream and that the real Hailstone would reappear. A few paces away King asked, “I don’t get it, what came over him? I was sure I was going to get a good taste of the cane, or at least a thousand lines—my fruit is better than gold, my fruit is better than gold...”

"Things happen, my boy," said Joel coolly.

"But what did you do? Why did you have to come to this office? I would never sell you out, you're me partner, you know? — And since when are you and the draught buddies?"

"A note!"

"A note? What note?"

"Yes, I passed a note."

"You passed a note? Are you taking music lessons or what?"

"I circulated a piece of paper, you blockhead."

"Circulated a piece of paper saying what?"

"That Mr. Hailstone is a better speaker than Mr. Donaldson."

"Is that all?"

"I guess so."

"That's deep, man."

"You think so?"

"Yeah man, you're cool man, a real cool man."

HAUNTED HERITAGE AND OTHER STORIES

King gave Joel a knuckle knock and they thumped their chest in unison.

“You’re cool man, you should be a writer.”

“What would I write about?”

“Oh! I don’t know — maybe life in the fast lane.”

THE END

BABY IN THE MIDDLE

By Albert Williams

She had instructed the gardener to mow and rake the lawn just as he would have done; Raleigh loved his front garden lawn trimmed every two weeks. Six months following their marriage, he has accepted a seven-year scholarship to study medicine. She only saw him once a year. Then for six weeks they would enjoy each other's company, and in the evening have passionate sex all night long.

In the sixth year, Mrs. Gamely announced to her husband over the telephone that she was expectant with child. Her husband of course received the news joyfully.

"I can't wait to leave the University to hold little Bernard if it's a boy," he said "or little Bernadette if it's a girl."

He told his wife that he would be coming home to stay, in the summer of 1989. That summer arrived sooner than Mrs. Gamely would have liked, but he was already here.

Raleigh had hired a taxi, arrived at 8:30am at the Canfield airport two hours ahead of time. "At least he could have telephoned to say that he had arrived," Mrs. Gamely thought to herself.

"I see you have managed to keep the keep the lawn and garden under control," he said.

"Whilst you were away," she replied, "the neighbour's son offered to do the gardening for us, you don't mind, do you?"

Mr. Gamely sat down on one of the upholstered chairs; he reached into his shirt pocket pulling out a packet of cigarettes.

"Aren't you going to kiss me?" his wife asked. "You haven't even asked to see the child, it's a boy."

"I know it's a boy! How many times do you have to tell me that!"

"Come-come-Raleigh, there's no need to be upset now. What you need is a long rest after your journey home."

"What I need is some good advice," he replied stiffly.

Mrs. Gamely had gone to fetch the child who had been asleep, but was crying full guns. "Voila!" She thrust the little child on him.

"He doesn't look a bit like me," Raleigh said. "Come to think of it he doesn't look like either of us."

"Raleigh! What has gotten into you, first you arrive two hours ahead of schedule..."

"Are you afraid of something?" Raleigh asked raising his voice

"You're not getting swell-headed, are you doctor?" Mrs. Gamely rocked the baby in her arms gently.

"And what do you mean by that?"

"I mean you have changed so much these last few years, you've even taken up smoking. Surely doctors shouldn't smoke especially in the company of women and children." She left the room with the baby crying loudly.

Later, Mrs. Gamely prepared a supper for her husband consisting of his entire favourite dished dishes and liqueurs. "Honey, you've hardly taken a bite, is there something wrong?"

"Yvette, I need to talk to you."

"That's hat I'm here for," Mrs. Gamely replied, "all those years."

"All those years I trusted, provided for you and..." his voice trailed off to a whisper, "you've done this to me."

Mrs. Gamely grew as white as a sheet. "I can't take it, I can't take it." She stormed from the table.

"Yvette! Yvette! Get back here at once!" the Dr. called out to her. He got up from the table and rushed to catch up with her. Yvette was in the room gazing at the little boy, her expression one of puzzlement. "Yvette, can we talk this over like two adults."

"What is there to talk about," Mrs. Gamely sobbed. "You've got what you wanted, you're doctor so and so..."

"I had a sperm count," the doctor said coldly.

"A sperm count?" Yvette repeated doubtfully.

"Yes," replied the doctor. "You see...It was optional, for our own benefit. Reproductive cycles forms part of human sexuality, you know that much, don't you."

"How could I not have," Yvette replied. "Your studies made quite a difference in your love making, all that frantic stuff and..."

"And the results," broke in the doctor, "were negative.

"Negative, what do you mean negative?"

"I mean that according to the specialist, the number and quality of these little wrigglers in my scrotum are very low and unable to produce a child."

“Unable to produce a child!” replied his wife.

“Unable to impregnate a female’s ovary,” the doctor explained.

“Are you telling me that...”?

“I’m impotent.” The doctor crumbled to the floor, his head resting on the edge of the bed. The room swirled around him in contrasting emotions.

“I don’t believe this nonsense.” His wife hoped that he was joking.

“According to my results I could not have fathered a child, not even if I wanted to.” Raleigh stood up, and drew the window curtains letting in the moonlight. In the distance of about ten yards, the neighbour’s house stood out with its high railings and red galvanized roof.

“Are you serious?” asked his wife. “Then...Then”

“Then you have been unfaithful to me.” The doctor turned round, his light brown eyes focused and cold. He suddenly grabbed Yvette and shook her violently. “You were unfaithful to me.”

“You’re hurting me,” Yvette screamed. At the sound of his mother’s voice the baby began to wail even louder.

Mr. Gamely let her loose. For a split second he had lost his sanity. His wife’s shrieking had brought him back to

his senses. "Tell me the truth woman!" he growled, "or else."

Mrs. Gamely realized that she could not play the game any longer. She confessed that while he had been studying she had been rather lonely. "I tried to keep myself occupied," she explained. "I went to church meetings, to the gym, I even started taking computer lessons, but at nights...At nights."

"Go on," demanded the doctor, "go on."

"O.K. Raleigh, I'll tell you the truth. I had Roger come over a few nights to keep me company," she said softly.

"Roger? Who is Roger?"

"The young man who looked after the garden," she replied.

"Is that the truth?"

"Yes I swear Raleigh, I swear."

The doctor ran his hand over his head, then over his favoured brow where a light sweat had broken out. "But did he have to go all the way. At least he could have had a little respect for you," he said finally.

"I tried," defended his wife, "to explain to him that all I needed was company, but he didn't listen I suppose. The doctor summarized.

"At least he could have used protection, you could even have contracted AIDS."

"Oh Raleigh, what are we going to do. I'm so embarrassed. The child should have a father and a home, but what about our reputation?"

He said, "I need to think."

After a period of fifteen minutes Mr. Gamely broke his silence. "We'll have to keep this under cover."

"Under cover? What do you mean?" asked Yvette.

"I mean, I know you always wanted to have children," he began. "And since it's been clinically tested that I can't produce sufficiently healthy sperm to impregnate you, we'll have to adopt the little bastard."

"You mean," exclaimed Yvette.

"I mean, having considered all the options, and the scandal this would cause if it were to leak out to the public," he concluded, "We'll have to raise him as if it were my very own."

Yvette gazed at the month-old infant sobbing on the bed, his head was turned to the left, and the profile bore a strong resemblance of Roger. "And what about Roger?"

"What about him," he replied. "I'm sure that you don't expect him to claim the child and face a lifetime of shame." Raleigh was breathing evenly now. "And

besides, he has not got the wherewithal to provide for a child."

"Oh Raleigh, what have I done to you." Yvette moved closer to Raleigh and sobbed on his shoulder. "I'm sorry, so sorry."

"AS I said the best plan of action is to accept the circumstance," declared the doctor. "So much for bedroom manners and respecting your neighbour's wife!"

"And what about Roger, do you think he'll agree?"

"Don't worry about him from today. Tell him he's been fired; we'll give him a handsome severance pay. I'm sure he'll find somebody else's garden to mow and tend to."

Two weeks later Mr. and Mrs. Gamely christened the babe, Bernard. He grew up in their household unaware of the irregularities surrounding his true identity. Roger was forbidden from seeing the child, and the doctor kept his secret for the rest of his life. After all which one is worse: to be unable to father children, or to raise an illegitimate child from an adulterous union. Neither the doctor nor his wife needed any prompting here.

THE END

DEAR SISTERS

By Albert Williams

The car wound it's way through the mountainous highway from the capital to Melville Hall. As they traversed the island, the temperature gradually cooled, rainbows formed colored bridges from mountain to mountain.

Up and up the asphalt road, at last the motorcar swung a curve into Margot. In a few moments, Londonderry would be in sight. At Melville Hall, a number of vehicles were already parked all along the car park. The blue Levin easily navigated a small space about ten feet from the main entrance, a trickle of other persons stood near by, presumably awaiting the 3:30 pm flight or one of any other reasons.

PA7273 had on board a plumb looking, dark skinned-young lady dressed in blue jeans, and a white and black blouse her name Jane Waters, one of two daughters of Mr. William Waters now deceased. Her sister and her husband both dressed in business type suits clutching black leather bas and Mrs. Waters, a middle age woman

with large, expressive eyes that eyed the world with suspicion. She seemed to have a permanent seriousness to her features. It was the climax to a two week vacation for Mr. & Mrs. Punjab that promised to be one of great enjoyment until cut short by the sudden death of Mr. Waters who had been ailing for some time just one week prior to his 68th birthday.

With Mr. Waters now in his final resting place, it was time for the living to carry on. Jane was in a somber mood, partly because her father was now dead but more so because she had learnt that her father had left ownership of his chain of department stores to Susan, his eldest child. Susan however had spent the better part of 15 years overseas migrating between Canada, England and India where she met her husband. A bright child, with keen academic abilities that proudly possess a degree in Political Science and were heading for a doctorate in International Relations.

Jane on the other hand was slow at learning. She failed at attempts of passing the Common Entrance Exams. When she reached third form at Goodwill School, she automatically entered her father's business as, among other things a check out clerk.

The drive to Melville Hall had been long and tiring and only twenty minutes remained for the relatives to say their final goodbyes. Light drizzle had begun as Susan embraced her mother. A trickle of tears in her eyes, "Well mum" she began "You know I love you but we have to go back to India. I must finish my dissertation but by the end of year I'll be back." She choked back tears.

“You do what is best,” replied Mrs. Waters. “When you come back preparation for your new management would have been completed.” she smiled a motherly smile. Susan then turned to Jane who was looking out across the Atlantic oblivious to the tearful sequence.

“Jane, I want you to take care of mum until I’m back. There is much I want do for you. Just be patient. I’ll be in touch, if anything gives me a call. You have my telephone number.”

Jane was silent, as she had been over the last two weeks since their father had died. She simply nodded her head and with eyes now searching the ground gave an ok that was hardly audible.

Minutes later, Susan and Jeff were airborne, the aircraft veering in a wide curve to the left, disappeared out of sight beyond the blue of the horizon.

The next day, Mrs. Waters woke up at 5am, her usual waking time, she a devoted woman, who loved the Lord always began her day with prayers. She would sing favorite hymns adoring God, whilst praying for her children and departed husband. There was an angel like appearance about her, as she knelt with arms upraised by her besides, praying for God’s people.

It was a week now since Mr. Waters had passed into the great beyond. Jane was due to be back at work today. At the breakfast table, Jane was still in another mournful mood although she tried her best to be as companionable as possible.

“Hi Mum,” she addressed her mother much like a familiar friend.

“Hello my dear,” replied Mrs. Waters, “how are you feeling?” I’m feeling ok, is just that I,” she stammered. “What is it?” her mother said.

“I’m well! What do you think is going to happen at the store now daddy is gone?”

“I know...The staff loved William. I’m sure it will take some time for them to get over this.” Minutes later Jane and her mum were finished eating their breakfast of brown whole wheat bread, eggs, passion fruit juice and salad. At approximately 7:45, she was out the door behind the steering wheel of her motorcar that was given to her by her father on her 18th birthday. Mrs. Waters, as was the custom always stood at the door to see her daughter off with the exchange of smiles. Jane drove down Federation Drive towards the city.

The Waters lived at the top of Federation Drive in a simple but beautiful 4-bedroom house, sprawled out in a lavishly cut lawn. A wide verandah circumvented the southern side facing the road. Mrs. Waters ventured back inside the homestead, standing for a moment in the spacious living room as her eye caught a framed photograph of Susan and Jane hung on the opposite wall. All visitors to the house remarked that Jane looked a lot like her father, his oval shaped head unmistakably. Susan on the other hand was the picture of her mother. Before Susan had gone to the states to study, although much older by seven years, she and Jane had an enviable

relationship. Somehow things had changed. Mrs. Waters shook her head in disbelief.

She sauntered over to the settee, her frail form on the soft comforting cushions with her mind again wondering. This time she recalled her wedding day and how happy she was locked in her husband's embrace reciting the marriage vows. For some reasons, she could recall almost every detail of that wedding day almost thirty years ago. She had met William when he was a jovial entrepreneur, young, energetic and ambitious. So ambitious, that he turned his retail store into the leading supermarket and department chain in Dominica. Twenty years later, he had opened branches in Portsmouth, Margot, La Plaine, and Grand Bay and began to build in St Joseph. It must have been 45 minutes since Mrs. Waters had been sitting there, lost in her reverie when she was rudely awakened by the telephone.

Jane had arrived at the supermarket just as the seven pips of the Greenwich Mean Time signal squeaked from the built in speakers of the car stereo, signaling that it was 8:00am in the Nature Isle. She brought the vehicle to a halt in one of the vacant spots in the car park. "Water Land" was the only supermarket that had a fairly large parking lot for its staff and customers. The building that was three stories high was in the middle of Casimir Road, occupying a whole block.

She scooped up her side bag, a novel and a birthday gift wrapped in silver paper tied with a red ribbon. She had been reminded that it was the birthday of Mr. Deharin, Assistant Manager of the store, when she

scanned her birthday book. She thought that an electric razor machine would be the ideal gift for him. She really wanted to get off to a good start on this her first day back on the job. Jane loved her work and her co-workers admired her just as much.

She walked past the automated mat that activated the electronic doors. The first person she greeted was James, the security guard. "Good morning James" she said cheerfully.

"Morning Miss...Good to have you back, sorry I couldn't attend the funeral, but please accept my sympathies." James said.

She continued to the back of the store passing a number of employees who all acknowledged her presence by kid remarks, hand shakes, kisses and hugs. She knocked on the glass door of the main office and entered. Miss Silverson, the secretary, was already on her desk punching at the keyboard of her Apple Macintosh. She stopped and stood up.

"Good morning, Miss Walters"

"Good morning, Miss Silverson" she replied without a second glance. She went round to her desk putting her bag on the metal file cabinet. The novel and gift she placed on the corner of the desk. After taking a seat, she clasped her hands, her fingers under her oval chin.

"You know, Miss Silverson, it seems like ages since I've been gone. I see Mr. Deharm has not yet come in. I have a little surprise for him: Miss Silverson cocked her eyebrows.

“A surprise!”

“Yes, don’t you know that today is his birthday?”

“Oh!” Miss Silverson burst into a giggle. The two exchanged small talk. Jane was brought up to date on happenings at the store for the last two weeks before she went back out to take her place at the check out counter among the five other young ladies towards the exit.

The office was elevated some four feet above the ground floor. One could see clearly through the five passages between the shelves. It was twenty past the hour. Patrons had already began to browse the many commodities—pushing wheel, carts, carrying wire baskets or simply strolling to and fro. “Water Land” was beginning to bubble.

THE END

NATURE GUIDE

By Albert Williams

“Your country is so beautiful, so unique,” Mandy said to her guide. She sniffed in the cool air of the undergrowth, then shivered slightly as a trickle of a gust blew against her sweaty skin.

Mandy steadied herself; the rocks beneath were slippery and jagged.

“That’s what all you visitors say,” responded the young man. He was of dark complexion and slightly-built, and he wore a smile like a wristwatch. “Hey!” he stretched his arms towards Mandy, “let me help you with your bag.”

“How sweet,” she swung the backpack at him, grabbing at a cluster of nearby saplings for support. “This is exhilarating.” She rubbed her hands over the surface of a full-grown Gommier tree, its branches spread out like mighty arms. “How long will it take to reach the lake?”

"By midday," the guide answered nonchalantly flashing another of his wide grins. "How come," he continued, "a pretty lady like you would go through all this trouble just to see a lake in the middle of Dominica." He stood still for a moment.

"because Dominica is a World heritage site?" she replied raising her eyebrows.

"Really, I didn't know that."

"You know it's almost a crime to be invading the privacy of the wild-life like this." She sighed deeply. "We've been on the trail now for almost an hour..."

"Don't you panic," butted in the guide, "where I'm bringing you, you're sure to say this is the Garden of Eden." He motioned Mandy along the footpath as she contemplated on what lay ahead. The undergrowth eventually gave way to a leafy-green Savannah about half the size of a football field.

"I'm really tired," the tourist declared, "this is the first time I've been on such a long hike, I think I'll have a rest right here." She dropped down on the vegetation.

"You look so beautiful sitting there," Ralph said admiring her, "let me take your photograph."

"Since it's my own camera," she replied "I think that would be quite an honour." She leaned back into her pose. In the distance a clump of young bamboos spread out like the plumes of a peacock's tail.

"Can you just hold." The guide clicked the camera then let it dangle about his chest. Then he placed a finger to his lips. "Shh," he whispered, "I can hear parrots!" They looked up

"You must get a shot of this. While you're resting I'll take a few shots for you." He started in the direction of the birds.

"Remember, don't point the camera to the sun." Mandy called out to him, but Ralph didn't respond. Either he was too preoccupied with his mission to capture the winged ones on film, or the rustle of the trees on that breezy mountain top had drowned her American lilt sweeping it back down the mountain side from which she had come.

Ten-twenty, then 40 minutes passed. A deep sense of dread now befell Mandy. Deciding that her guide had gone long enough, she set off in the direction she had seen him disappear beneath the edge of the Savannah, returning again to the thick undergrowth. Sunbeams shining eerily between the thick boughs of the Gommier and White Cedars, played tricks on her. "Ralph is that you?" but only the soft rustle of the tropical rain forest answered her.

Mandy plodded on for over an hour, then she heard the sounds of drums being played. A few metres ahead, she came upon two men who were sitting in the shade of a small bamboo house. "Hello," she said "would you by chance have seen a young man pass this way? His name is Ralph."

“Ralph?” the elder of the two asked in surprise.

“Yes Ralph, he’s my tour guide. We’re going to see the Freshwater Lake. He went to take some photographs of the parrots over two hours ago and he hasn’t returned since.”

“Did I hear you say Freshwater Lake? The Freshwater Lake is miles and miles away from here Sister,” the younger man explained. “How come this Ralph that you speak of doesn’t know that you don’t go to the Freshwater Lake by passing through Morne Negre.”

“Yes Sister, how come your tour guide don’t know that.” The young man tossed his head back sending his cocoa-coloured locks flying in an arc, then began to tap on his goatskin drum. She stared at the two men. Presumably they were Rastafarians. She thought that the little hut and the surrounding rows of fruits and vegetables of all descriptions were picturesque, but she decided that they, the two Rastas, looked as if they needed some attention.

“Anyway,” she replied, “are you going to help me find him or not?”

The elder dread seemed to be thinking, the he said “O.K Sister, I and I will help you find this tour guide, but first you must be sanctified.”

“Sanctified? What are you, some kind of preist?” Mandy retorted.

“Yes Sister,” the younger dread joined in, “you must smoke the sacrament in order that your far Eye can be opened .”

“Yes I,” the elder dread agreed, “so that the Most High can reveal where and who this tour guide really is.” He then commenced to bless the water pipe, before passing it to Mandy who refused.

Meanwhile, Inspector Cockrane had picked up the smokey trail by coincidence while on a routine petrol of the area. He was accompanied by a dozen officers. “Freeze!” an officer shouted as the squad surrounded the tourist and the two Rastafarians.

“Well, what have we here?” Inspector Cockrane stepped out from the shadows.

“Oh Jah!” exclaimed the younger.

“Shut up! It’s the same jah business that does land you young men in trouble, “the Inspector shouted. “Now everyone put your hands up high where I can see them!” he shouted again.

“Officer I’m sure I can explain all this.”

“Oh yes, then let’s hear you.” The Inspector listened to the woman’s story intently before speaking with the Sergeant in hushed tones. Finally he said, “You should always ensure that you hire a registered tour guide from a reputable agency. These days are not what they used to be.”

"Now you know the truth," the elder locksman butted in, "you can let us off."

"Is true," the younger one said, "I and I was minding I and I business when this sister appear...we were going to help her when..."

"You were going to help her, help her," snarled the Inspector. "Before I can let you and your follower off you will have to assist us with our search for this tour guide."

"Inspector," Mandy responded, "I'm sure that they will be happy to do that." She cast a comforting smile across at the two dreads who still had their hands in the air.

"Well I guess it's a deal big man," they said.

"O.K. then, that's it," and with a nod of the head the Inspector ordered his men to commence the search.

Mandy felt like a hostage, as it turned out. It certainly wasn't her idea of a relaxing hike to see a Dominican scenic spot. She dragged on silently. Then she heard an officer say, "Sir, I think I hear someone calling for help."

A second officer confirmed it. "Yes Sir, I too Sir."

"Where on earth..." began the Inspector, but before he could finish his sentence a third officer shouted.

"Look here Sir!" Hidden from view the officer had discovered a pit about 6ft deep. At the bottom lay Mandy's tour guide.

"Ralph, are you alright?" Mandy peered down the hole. The Inspector's jaw dropped as he gaped at the man below.

"Well, well, well, guess who's this, the famous Kojoe. McIntyre get on the radio, we found our last escapee. Tell them to send a helicopter," snarled Inspector Cockrane. "O.K. Kojoe, it seems," he told the man in the hole, "that you didn't dig the pit, but you fell in it!"

Mandy at hearing the Inspector's sarcasm asked, "Did you say that this man is Kojoe?"

"Yes Miss Parketta, Ralph Mason alias Kojoe is one of three escaped convicts who broke their cells two days ago. The prisoner must have been unaware of one of the pits the local hunters dug to catch the wild boar."

"The wild boar!"

"But don't you worry Miss Parketta, we'll soon have this little piggy in custody where he belongs," the Inspector assured her. "I simply love a good chase." He smiled at Mandy. "Now you two," he frowned at the two dreads. "Get out of here before I change my mind and have you arrested for cultivation and possession of marijuana." The dreads made themselves scarce.

"McIntyre, radio to base to make it quick, it seems as if the prisoner may have broken his right leg, and they'll have to take this young lady along for the ride, a little sky view of the Freshwater Lake wouldn't hurt her and the

ALBERT WILLIAMS

view from above is really nice.” He smiled gently at Mandy. She only shook her head and blushed.

THE END

RECIPE FOR MURDER

By Albert Williams

When I arrived on the crime scene, Suite 109 on the third floor of the Bense Hotel, the Managing Director, Mrs Hopper, was speaking with the elderly maid that had discovered the body of the 24 year old American journalist. "Who was she?" I asked, pointing to the dead woman.

"Rosemond Holmes, a journalist from the states," replied Mrs Hopper.

"How long had she been at this hotel?"

"She checked in two nights ago."

"Did you or anyone of your staff observe anything strange or unusual. Visitors perhaps?" I asked, drawing out my notebook.

"Miss Holmes had many visitors." She replied, I presumed they were all connected in one way or the

other with her work." She paused, "She did seem, though, to be sort of unusually friendly."

She appeared to gloat at the body of the slain woman, "And as you know there's this opening of the art exhibition of this famous African artist, Joseph Olanbago from Ghana. He is...to...er unveil his latest masterpiece commissioned by the United Nations"

She spread her hands as if she was holding up a painting. I then asked her, "Do you have any person in mind who could have done this?" "No! Absolutely none!"

I looked Mrs Hopper over from head to toe before sweeping my eyes across the room. The drapes were drawn, the room was as orderly as one could expect, showing no signs of violence. The maid was smoothing her apron with her hands as I spoke. "The men from the Homicide Unit will be here shortly."

"I want this room kept closed until they arrive. We don't want anyone tampering with the evidence. I expect that you and your staff will co-operate fully with us over the course of the investigation, Mrs Hopper?"

"I'm quite sure that helping the police would not be much of a problem, Inspector Rusell" she replied.

I shot a glance at the dead woman on the wide bed. She was a coloured girl. Apparently she had been strangled with a scarf. It was about 9:30pm when I left the hotel with only one unanswered question left dangling in my mind.

The following afternoon the lobby of the Bense Hotel was the venue for Joseph Olanbango's art exhibition. Dominica's artistic elite was present. The crews of a number of media houses were also set up all over. A host of security personnel were visible, eyed the guests with interest. Diana Whit-Cliff, daughter of an eminent art critic was among the invitees. She was in the company of a male adult. "I'm glad that you decided to come," he said to her.

"I don't really have an interest in art. I only come to please you" she said.

"I'm a hard man to please." He replied.

"You're very strange. I don't know why I like you!" She replied "but I am enjoying this much more than I expected. You know, I used to think that art exhibitions were boring, that only stuffed up people, like my father, were into!"

Meanwhile, I had caught up with her famous father, who was admiring one of the exhibits. When she noticed him speaking with me, she and Jarrette, her companion came across, "Hi Dad! Impressive, eh?"

"Certainly, my dear. You seem to be really enjoying yourself. I haven't seen you appreciate a piece of art before. Congratulations!" he turned toward me, winking.

"Have you seen the 'weeping woman'?" his daughter asked.

"Not yet,. By the way, I'd like you to meet a friend, Mr Russell." How are you?" I asked politely. "This exhibition surpasses my expectations," she said. "My friend here, Jarrette, encouraged me to come." She sprawled her palm over his chest while he simply stood there grinning.

I asked him, "Are you an artist of some sort?" "Not really," he said. "but I really admire fine art."

"That's interesting, very interesting." Moments later, we were shuffling along the gallery, literally being pushed forward by the swarm of spectators that had all come out to witness Joseph Glanbango's masterpiece—an African woman thrusting a spear through the belly of a young ion. "This is cruel," remarked Diana. "Senseless" offered Jarrette.

"As senseless as the murder of Rosemond Holmes a night ago in this very hotel," I said gasping at him as he opened his eyes. "Did you know that she was a celebrated journalist?"

"She was a photo-journalist, here to represent 'Ebony Highlights,'" Diana replied. "I heard about her on the news this morning." I let her words carry in the air. At a predetermined sign, four men, two in police uniforms approached Jarrette.

"Excuse me, sir," said one of the men, "could you accompany us to Police Headquarters?". "What have I done?" protested Jarrette. "We have reason to believe

that you may be able to assist us in the investigations of the murder of Rosemond Holmes.” The spokesperson said as the two uniformed police officers laid hold on him, grabbing him at the elbows.

“Now don’t do anything stupid,” I cautioned. “You’ll only make the matter worse.” I produced a leather-cased identification card, showing it to the suspect as the men hurriedly lead him through the unsuspecting guests who were now engrossed with the main attraction—the unveiling of the famous artist’s masterpiece. Minutes later, a waiting unmarked police vehicle outside in the quadrangle carried him away.

I was about to leave the station after completing the process of Jarrette Simon, when an angry Diana Whitcliff stormed in accompanied by her father. I told them, “Jarrette has been arrested and charged with the murder of Rosemund Holmes of the United States. He is to appear before the magistrate tomorrow, for a preliminary inquiry. Most likely, bail will be denied.”

“But that’s outrageous! I can’t believe I,” sobbed Diana “there must be some mistake.” She clutched her father, crying openly. “Of course, a man is innocent until proven guilty,” I told her. “My job is to supply the evidence.” Can we visit him?” asked Mr Whitcliff.

“I’m afraid not until the PI has been heard. No there is nothing more I can tell you.” I walked away leaving them lost in their thoughts. I did not turn back as I jumped into my jeep. As far as I was concerned, the man-hunt was over.

At the PI, the prosecution established beyond doubt that the evidence leading to the arrest of one Jarrette Simon was sound, corroborated by the findings of the forensic experts who determined that finger prints on the victim's telephone receiver were identical to the suspect's, who'd been identified as an intruder caught on several of the hotel's security cameras impersonating a room-attendant.

The presiding magistrate, Peter O'Neil ruled that the reviewed tapes were admissible.

He listened thoughtfully to the Medical Examiner's statement of Maggie, the elderly maid who had discovered the body that fateful evening. The accused up to this point had refused to be coerced into signing a prepared statement and was adamant that he was innocent. He insisted the whole affair was nothing but a farce and a frame up. But his protests were not enough to persuade his worship to grant him bail, in spite of the number of sureties present nor was he able to dissuade the magistrate from having him remanded to the State Prison for a full week before his case would be brought before Judge Eagle back at the Dominica High Court of Justice.

Seven days later, I met Diana on the steps of the court. She was alone, dressed in a simple grey skirt and white blouse, clutching a little brown lady's bag.

"This is very unpleasant business for you," I said, for want of conversation.

"I still don't understand," she replied. "I can assure you we have the right man, confession or not. When we were convinced that your friend was the perpetrator we set up a 24 hour watch."

"But how did you arrive at that?" she asked. "From the hotel's surveillance cameras." We were now inside the courtroom, where a large gathering waited anxiously. "We then followed him night and day. When he led us to the exhibition, our concern for your safety grew." I told her, my eyes glued to hers. "It's common, you know, for criminals to return to the scene of the crime. God knows what he may have had in his mind." We sat on one of the mahogany benches to the rear of the room, as I did not want to be preparing this witness who was scheduled to take stand. "Did you even suspect from his behaviour that he may have been involved in something already?"

"Not really," she said "but he was very tense lately, so I thought he wanted to view the exhibition in relax." She turned her eyes up to the ceiling. "I just don't get it...it's too peculiar. A man murders a woman and he's walking casually in the streets of Roseau, as if nothing amiss has happened," I said to her, "Well, we'll just have to wait to hear what he has to say," she replied. "I know he's innocent, you're going to have to pay for this." She stood up, then moved away without another word before losing herself in the throng of curious on-lookers waiting for the trial to begin.

"Why...I didn't know what to do at first." Mrs Hopper was the last witness to take the stand on behalf of the

prosecution. Replying to a question posed to her by the defendant's government appointed lawyer she appeared to be somewhat nervous. A rather plump woman, her many years in the Caribbean had given her face a golden tan that now was turning a pale orange as the lawyer brought to bear on her his years of experience.

"When did you call the police?" he asked. "After I was sure that she was dead, I called the police."

"Approximately what time do you figure this crime took place?" "I would say about 7:30."

"In the morning?" "No, in the evening,." She said, her face now fully flushed. Producing a white handkerchief from the top pocket of the blue executive suit that she wore, she wiped her face and forehead, relieving herself of the beads of perspiration that had begun to form. "What time did you call the police?" the lawyer asked, his eyes focused on the witness. "About 9:13pm," she replied. I swung my head around the courtroom. The gallery was filled with many young persons. Also representatives of Ebony Highlight were seated, not too far from me. Obviously, they were here to receive justice on behalf of their murdered colleague. The defendant, Jarrette Simon, stood in the prisoner's dock, hand handcuffed behind his back, his chin resting on his chest.

"Had you known Miss Holmes prior to this?" "I first heard of her last August at a Hotelier's Conference in Barbados. She created quite a stir."

“Why was that?” “She claimed in one of her articles, that certain hotels in Dominica discriminated against blacks,” A muffled gasp arose from the gallery. “Do you know the defendant?”. The lawyer asked her, pointing to Jarrette. Mrs Hopper paused for a moment, then to my surprise, I saw her slump, then collapse unto the wooden rail that ran along the witness box.

“Ma’am are you all right?” the lawyer asked. The next minute Mrs Hopper was actually crumpled in the box, looking quite ill.

Judge Eaglebeck intervened. “Mr Thomas, do you intend to further question this witness?” “No further questions Mi Lord,” The lawyer said, before approaching the prisoner’s dock, where he spoke to his client, who glared at the spectacle of Mrs Hopper being led away by two female police officers. It was almost midday; incredibly hot and humid. The judge cleared his throat before he addressed the jury, seven men and three women. “Members of the jury, you have listened to the evidence as presented in this case, the State versus Jarrette Simon.” He nodded at Jarrette who stared right back at him “One thing is clear that as long as I continue to occupy this seat horrendous crimes of this nature will bring upon the perpetrator of such the fullest extent of the law. Justice will be served.”

Judge Eaglebeck now had his eyes fixed on the ten-man jury who, I imagine, were very uncomfortable under his gaze. He continued “The defendant will be remanded in custody. Members of the jury you will now retire for one hour to consider your verdict.” And with

that he slammed his gavel, stood up and then regally strode off to his adjoining chambers.

In all my twenty-nine years as a police officer, working my way from a constable to my present position, I have never been more anxious to hear a jury's decision. The curious onlookers mumbled continually until the clerk called the room to order.

"have the members of the jury decided upon a verdict?" the judge asked. "Yes My Lord, we have found Jarrette Simon, guilty as charged." The Foreman said. A gasp emanated across the courtroom. Members of the jury sat motionless in their seats; however, the two women who were colleagues of the victim, hugged each other weeping. Above the muffled sounds of the mixed reactions, a woman's shrieking voice surfaced.

"No-no-no, please" she said, "It was my idea...I pushed him to it."

"Order in court! Order in court!" The judge slammed his gavel so hard, I thought that it had broken. "Constable, restrain this woman." The room was now quiet, as everyone sought to make sense of the confession that was coming from a most unlikely person, Mrs Hopper.

"Another outburst from you my lady, and I will charge you with contempt of court." The judge said. A few moments passed before he spoke again, this time to the accused. "Jarrette Simon of 21 Grassteaf St, Roseau, you have been found guilty of first degree murder, do you wish to say anything before I pass sentence?"

THE LITTLE LAMB

By Albert Williams

Heskeith Alphonse Cedrick Tamarind landed in the village forty years ago. a little red-skinned, hunched-back man, with a head too big for his body, walking up the village road with only a suitcase in his hand. He set up shop in a deserted house right in the middle of the village.

A few days later he was seen driving what appeared to be the essential components of a Bedford truck. In a few weeks he had built a masterpiece of a passenger box, painted it in yellow with red and green strips, the seats he covered with black leatherette. Every morning before day break he would awaken to inspect his truck, with flashlight in hand, he would fuss over the engine, poke at the tires, and lovingly run his hand over the wooden box. Villagers thought that he was mad as it was rumoured that he spoke to the truck in hushed tones, and quite appropriately he nicknamed the truck 'Little Lamb'.

Before dawn broke, Mr. Tamarind drove through the village signaling with the horn that he was about to depart for Roseau.

It was Wednesday and this weekend was the village feast. Soon the passengers filled the benches; Miss Giles, the schoolteacher with her daughter, Sussie; Ma Johnson, a shop-runner; Fr. Bucket the village priest clutched his black bag and finally Jake, the tailboard man, actually he was a teenager that Mr. Tamarind had employed at the bequest of his mother, to 'keep him out of trouble.'

"Well it's another beautiful day," they heard him say. But no one answered, because they knew he wasn't speaking to any one of them in particular, but to his little lamb. The truck seemed to shudder in response as it huffed and puffed up the long hill, and then whined as it sped down the other side, sending its passengers sprawling and cargo of ground provisions (for Ma Johnson's son, who attended the Dominica Grammar School) gliding under the seats, much to the annoyance of Fr. Bucket.

Suddenly, a loud bang came from the rear, "Papa God," says Jake, holding on to the post of the box.

"Stop the truck!—stop the truck—something is wrong," Fr. Bucket called out. Sure enough, the rope that had been used to hold up the tailboard had snapped under the weight of its cargo and cadet. Reluctantly, Mr. Tamarind stopped the truck.

"It won't be long, my little lamb, let's see what's the matter," Mr. Tamarind said.

He sucked his teeth hard and long. "This is very bad, you could have damaged her parking lights, and oh!look how you've scratched the paint,' he scolded.

Red Boy from the neighbouring village happened upon the scene, his new bus full of smiling passengers. He stopped and offered to help.

"Well Mr. Tamarind," he said, "I doh have a thick rope but I have this." He produced a long chain from under his seat. "I always knew that it would come in ahndy," he chuckled. "But don't you see its time to get rid of dat old truck," he ridiculed. "Dese are modern times, man get with the style."

"Nothing you say," defended Mr. Tamarind will get me to give up my little lamb—anyway thanks for the chain, as soon as I can I will return it to you," he said with hardly a smile.

Jake reorganized the goods again on the tailboard and gave Mr. Tamarind the signal to go ahead. For the rest of the journey Mr. Tamarind told jokes of his days in England, how he had served in the army and never been to war, had married twice and divorced twice, and had marched in African Liberation Day rallies, not because he was convinced that this was the right thing, but because all the black people in his part of Yorkshire were doing it. His little lamb only shuddered and spluttered. Miss Giles

and her daughter ate mangoes and threw the skin on the road, Ma Johnson constantly fanned herself and Fr. Bucket fidgeted with his black bag. As for Jake he was sitting on a bag of what looked like cocoa beans for fear that a similar tailboard incident would happen again.

Later, when Mr. Tamarind returned from Roseau, he parked momentarily outside Ma Johnson shop while her husband and son offloaded the goods; boxes of chicken parts, crates of soft drinks, cartoons of cigarettes and rum. Fr. Bucket hadn't returned that evening as he had an important meeting to attend, but he had picked up Rufus and his girlfriend who had just come in from Guadeloupe, also another young man and his girlfriend, who had come to visit relatives.

Whilst there, BoyBoy came driving a Toyota bus, one just like Red boy's.

"Yes, yes, yes," the children shouted, "you mean business papa!"

"How you know dat," he replied "all dem fellars from Cocoa village, Deadman's and Whilthaman, buying dese buses," he said breathlessly.

"dem truck out of style, you know" the children began to jeer at Mr. Tamarind. "You old-fashion monkey, that thing you driving slow, slow, slow!"

"I will never," began Mr. Tamarind "abandon my little lamb." He patted the window screen lightly. "And besides," he continued, "My truck is more convenient to

carry the provisions for your brothers and sisters in Roseau and to buy the groceries for your shop, you ungrateful little things," he barked.

But the children taunted him all the more, "Garcon dat truck only good for the museum and to carry figs—ha, ha, ha," they laughed.

Night came and Mr. Tamarind removed his black jacket shirt and tie, washed, settled down to a light supper then went straight to bed, his little lamb parked right outside his window where he could see her. Of course, Mr. Tamarind eventually fell asleep. Even in his sleep he would have dreams of his adventures with his "little lamb". He dreamt of the happenings of the day just passed, the broken tailboard and the snide remarks of the children and recently, newly owned bus drivers, Redboy and BoyBoy. As his sleep deepened he heard a little voice saying, "leave me alone you pervert!" Mr. Tamarind awoke with a start.

At first he thought that it was one of the village girls with a suitor on their way home after an evening of moonlight frolicking. He saw the man, large and white, like a giant Eucharist pined in the night sky. But, strangely, there was no sign of his truck. Accordingly, he slipped out of bed, threw his jacket over his pyjamas and armed with a flashlight started for the front door. He looked up and down the street, but there was no truck to be seen. "Oh my God," he screamed, "Oh my little lamb—my little lamb!"

The next morning, Mr. Tamarind's disclosure that his truck had been stolen was the talk of the village. "I believe that something dreadful has happened to my little lamb" he cried.

But the crowd of onlookers unsympathetically burst out laughing "You're too old fashioned."

As could have been expected Mr. Tamarind was very upset. He went about crestfallen, asking everyone he met, "have you seen my little lamb?" But no one could help him. He called the police but he was unable to help.

Finally, the chairman of the village council called a meeting of the village to discuss the unfortunate incident. "We all know," he told the gathering "that ever since Mr. Tamarind came to this village, he has been a civic-minded resident, doing no harm to anyone but doing good to you all. I suggest that we all mount a search right away for Mr. Tamarind's truck and the culprits will be brought before the law."

The villagers agreed. For two days they searched everywhere but no truck was found. They looked in banana fields but found nothing, they looked along the beach, but their search was futile.

The theft of Mr. Tamarind's truck cast a gloomy blanket over the village feast that weekend. Everyone felt very sad that Mr. Tamarind's truck had probably been stolen. The villagers knew that Mr. Tamarind loved his truck. It was all he lived for, he loved his truck with a passion. Moreover, Mr. Tamarind offered a reward to

anyone who could offer any information that would lead to the recovery of the property.

Monday came, no truck appeared. Tuesday, still no luck. Now it so happened that two young boys who had gone fishing on the rocks beneath the main road by the sea discovered what remained of the truck, in a crushed heap, in it were Rufus and his girlfriend, dead.

News spread quickly that Mr. Tamarind's truck had been found by the two boys and a large crowd soon gathered on the beach to witness the findings. The mother of Rufus was crying pitifully, she couldn't believe that her son could have stolen Mr. Tamarind's truck. "What was he thinking?" the police asked her.

When Mr. Tamarind reached he immediately broke down in tears. "The truck fell from a soft drop onto the rocks below beyond repair," the village mechanic remarked. Soon the ambulance arrived. The doctor on duty pronounced Rufus and his girlfriend dead on the spot. But all Mr. Tamarind could say was, "My poor little lamb, my poor little lamb, what have they done to you?" Mr. Tamarind began to cry uncontrollably, soon everyone was crying, but no matter how much they cried no amount of tears could bring back the little lamb.

THE STORM

By Albert Williams

Roddy Bane shakes his head as the weatherman announces that a hurricane watch is in effect for the islands. His wife Sheila-Anne is seated on a settee across the room; his sixteen year old daughter, as beautiful as a morning sun, is standing by the front door. Mr. Bane is absentmindedly twirling a glass filled with rum.

“Can’t he find something proper to tell people?” he mutters. “Good Lord, I’ve lived all my life here and no hurricane ever...”

“Aw, won’t you hush up!” interrupts his wife who is trying to make sense out of the weatherman’s predictions.

“This is serious you know, they say this is a dangerous storm,” she adds making a gesture with her hands to silence him.

“A dangerous storm...Bah” retorts Mr. Bane. “Nothing but a little...”

“Well listen nuh,” chides Sheila-Anne, her eyes glued to the TV set as the man on the television points out the current coordinates.

“I wonder what’s it like to go through a hurricane,” says Tarah, almost to herself, flicking a handful of her dark-brown tresses over her right shoulder as she peers out into the fading light.

“Not a very nice thing,” responds her mother, who saunters towards the front door where Tarah is standing. “I can remember my mother telling me that in 1935 a bad hurricane hit Dominica and plenty people did get killed,” she says nodding her head sagely.

“All this meteorological stuff.....Bah!” interjects Mr. Bane. “Never heard anyone talk about a hurricane in...” he leans back into his favourite armchair frowning.

“Papa God, make this storm pass us,” utters Sheila-Anne as she quickly makes the sign of the cross.

“All you not hearing,” ejaculates Roddy. “All you and dat TV is two of a kind, I wish dat hurricane would come for true and let me hear you talk bout storm coming.

“Roddy!” exclaims Mrs. Bane, her teeth clenched and eyes glowering. “How can you say dat?” she spurts.

Mr. Bane doesn't reply, instead he leans forward reaching for the centre table where the bottle of D-Special rum, newly opened, is standing. He tops his glass with some more of the stuff. Without much of a thought he dumps the contents into his mouth, swirls it around, then swallows with a gulp. The stinging beverage makes his eyes twinkle with redness, as his face contorts with a hideous grimace. He coughs.

Mr. Bane is a sawmill operator at a local lumber yard. This afternoon he is home earlier than usual as the company has let the workers off since midday, so that they could look after their families in the anticipation of a direct hit by the storm. He had passed by Port-of-Call for a drink or two with a few of his colleagues, and by the time he reaches home he was thoroughly intoxicated.

Tarah, who herself would normally have been out with her friends about this time, has taken the government's warning seriously. She has decided to stay indoors, keeping periodic checks on the storm's progress via the radio and television for updates.

Mrs. Bane peering out of the window observes in the distance huge masses dark of clouds, she says, "Boy! The sky so ugly, I'm glad you are here with me. I'm going to check the kitchen to see if we might need anything."

As the afternoon wears on the sky changes drastically; an otherwise red and orange sunset is obscured by the foreboding cheerless clouds.

Mr. Bane is propped up in his favourite armchair, dressed in the same blue jeans and denim long sleeved shirt that he wore to work today. His head is cocked to one side as Tarah tries to wake him pleading. "Daddy, come on, help me to nail some plywood over some of the windows," she begs. "They say the hurricane will hit us at midnight," she adds shaking him. Roddy's reply is blurred and angry.

"Aw leave me alone," he chides, "can't you see...Can't you see no hurricane, Bah!"

Tarah gives him a disgusted glance.

Suddenly a dazzling streak illuminates the evening sky, plunging the villa into a thick darkness, followed several moments later by a deafening roar overhead as thunder pounds the already humid atmosphere.

Tarah covers her ears giggling while her father is startled. "What the !...what was dat?" he says springing to his feet in a daze.

At that moment Mrs. Bane returns from the kitchen holding a long white candle, its warm flame casting dancing shadows. "Hello dear," she says "the lightning must have cut the light. We have a flashlight nuh?"

"Yes Mum," answers Tarah, "I'll go and get mine." The contours on Tarah's feminine silhouette recede into the darkness. Mrs. Bane sets the candle on a saucer, placing it on a shelf below the portrait of Jesus Christ,

then she turns, walks over to her husband who's still sitting in his armchair. She touches him lightly on his knee and sighs. After a pause she says, "so look at you, Mr. Bane. You should be ashamed of yourself."

She turns and continues speaking . "Drunk like a fish when you should be helping us get things under control."

Another clap of thunder rumbles in the heavens and slightly rocks the house, followed by a burst of heavy raindrops large as golf balls that now beat upon the roof. Tarah returns with the torch, training its beam from window to window. She says, "I really wish we had boarded up the other windows."

"Let's just take it easy," advises her mother trying to sound comforting. "Maybe...Things won't be as bad as all that."

Tarah complains further that she is feeling chilly since the evening temperature had dropped a few degrees as the evening thickened over the island. When she went to search for the flashlight she had donned a thick woolen sweater and a pair of slacks to keep her warm. She also brought a small transistor radio which she has on a local radio station, its soft music mingling with the feeling of apprehension in the living room.

Roddy is still clutching his empty glass, but now he's singing a refrain of a reggae number; "When the rain falls," he croaks, "it won't fall on one man's house top," he runs his hand over his unshaven face, then points in

the direction of his wife and child and adds, "Remember that."

Time draws by slowly. The evening is uneventful. Tarah is sitting by the front door on a low stool. She is thinking over what her mother has said about the hurricane of 1935; then she shudders at the thought of so many people being killed.

Mr. Bane has other thoughts as he peeps between half closed eyes. He silently concludes that his wife was naïve enough to expect a hurricane of some silly tale told by her mother, perhaps to keep her quiet like a little girl, or discourage her from playing outdoors in the wind and rain. As the midnight hours arrives, Mr. Bane breaks the gloomy silence.

"As you see, midnight, no hurricane," he laughs, a deep-belly kind of ridiculous laugh.

Mrs. Bane retorts defensively "well it's better to be prepared than to be not ready and wind and rain come smashing up everything and you don't know what is going on."

"But I want to see the wind and rain, like how they does show it in the learning channel," Tarah says with a smug smile on her face, making the dimples in her cheek stand out like two holes on either side of her mouth.

"Anyway," replies Sheila-Anne, "you and your father does really get under my skin." She begins to walk

around the room checking to see if everything is in order, then she sits on the sofa and sighs, “well my dear, we might as well try to get some sleep.” She tries in vain to stifle a yawn. “Perhaps your father is right, dem weather people always predicting.” She nods in the direction of her husband who is already asleep in his armchair.

Dawn breaks under the ferocious winds, a low atmospheric pressure has created ideal conditions for the deadly vortex that has developed into a category four hurricane—a very dangerous storm. Roddy, Sheila-Anne and Tarah listen to the extremely high winds accompanied by torrential rains that are now pouring as if all the waterfalls in the world had been diverted over the Bane’s residence.

Roddy, who seems to have slept off the effects of last night’s carousing is houting above the screeching scenario. “All you,” he bellows “get buckets, bath tub...anything to put where dat leaking,” he advises.

“This really looking bad,” says his wife. Roddy nods in agreement, his mind now sober, but rather confused not knowing what to do in the present circumstances. Roddy has never experienced anything like this before. He turns his head abruptly to what sounds like someone trying to yank off the entire roof. Roddy Bane is a well built man, having gotten plenty of exercise from handling loads of lumber at his work place. He considers himself fearless, afraid of no one; but at the moment he feels a painful ache in his chest at the mounting concern for his dear family.

Up to eight inches of muddy rain water flows freely on the floor. An earthy odor permeates the air. Outdoors the gale continues to blow from every direction. Suddenly, Mrs. Bane screams, "Oh my God." Through the open front door she recognizes Tarah's girlish figure crouching against the weather as she attempts to record the scene on her camcorder. "Tarah!" shouts Mrs. Bane with tears welling in her eyes, "get back inside."

Her order passes in vain. Tarah's fascination with the phenomenon has her trapped within its magical grasp. Meanwhile, Mr. Bane himself is at the entrance in a trice. He too shouts to his daughter. "Tarah!" he yells, cupping his thick hands around his mouth, "what do you think you are doing?" "Come inside," he commands her.

At that frightening moment, to his horror, he sees his daughter being lifted clean from her feet and being hauled several metres along a slippery lawn before she is lodged in a low-cut hedge that acts as a fence along the perimeter of the front lawn where she nows hold on to prevent herself from being blown further, as well as for the fear of the loss of her life, her camcorder now carried aloft by the powerful currents tumbling and smashing before her eyes. Roddy is almost dumbstruck, he gapes unbelievably as Tarh is obscured from sight by the screen of leaves, dirt and other debris hurled between them.

"What!" exclaims Sheila Anne, "do something" she shrieks, tears now streaming down her face.

“God helps me utters Roddy, as he bites hard into his lips, “I’m going to get her,” he adds, his hands trembling.

“Hurry Roddy!” screams his wife again, the strong wind blowing her hair into her face. They gaze for moments as Tarah wedged among the branches of the shrub some forty feet away, stares back at them with a look of utter surprise and terror in her beautiful brown eyes.

Roddy crawls on all fours, gripping the earth as one would grip a blanket, inching his bulk forward, pushing against what seems like the strength of twenty men. He curses under his breath, wishing he could say the word and all at once still the storm, but Roddy realizes there is no way out. He now fears for both of their lives. As he closes in to Tarah he calls out to her, “don’t move—Daddy is coming to get you.” A few more feet and he has reached the bushy branches of the shrub.

He orders Tarah to hold on to him while he firmly grips the young lady around her waist.

Tarah instantly obeys her father. She feels more secure as Mr. Bane’s towering form acts as a human shield, and together they retrace their tracks back along the lawn, pausing at times on all fours as the cruel winds wipes around them. All the time Tarah is thinking about the power of the wind as she witnessed first hand a number of fruit trees completely uprooted. She also saw portions of the roof of roofs of the neighbour’s home flying in the storm like kites. At last they reach the house where Tarah

sees her mother waiting anxiously, her hand holding her jaws like one who has a terrible toothache.

It's all right," purrs Mrs. Bane looking over her rescued daughter.

"Mother," Tarah says. "I never know wind could be so strong." She gazes fearfully over her shoulder at the dramatic view of a hurricane in full force.

"I never knew," says her mother, glaring at Tarah, "that you could be so irresponsible to try something like that."

"All I wanted was to record some action," confesses Tarah, "so we could watch it later." Meanwhile the storm is unrelenting like a monstrous octopus, its tentacles lashing the villa with a barrage of powerful gusts.

Hardly a minute has passed since the child's return to safety, when Mr. Bane realizes the roof of the house will not hold. "All you," he says "lets go under there," pointing to an open space beneath the counter in the kitchen, as the gusts outside seem to intensify.

"Quick!" he shouts. Sheila-Anne and Tarah huddle beneath it clutching each other, followed by Mr. Bane as what sounds like a huge wave envelopes the area spewing large chunks of the stonewall, almost enclosing the three of them in a dark tomb.

For the next few hours the family is utterly quiet. Only the horrifying screech of the wind can be heard, that echoes in their very bones. Finally the wind subsides and the sun shines with a brilliance as if nothing disastrous had taken place. It's brilliant midday rays revealing total devastation.

Roddy Bane, meanwhile is pushing against a slab of the stone wall that has enclosed him and his family under the counter where they had weathered the storm.

Finally succeeding, he climbs out, then helps Tarah, then Sheila-Anne. "Well," he sighs, "I'll never doubt another weatherman again. They knew what they were talking about this time." Roddy took his wife in his arms, kissing her gently on the cheek.

"Hey, you two," says Tarah, "I want to experience another. This is fun but just a little rough, don't you think," she added rubbing her chin.

"You and your adventurous mind," teased Mr. Bane. "one of these days you will understand the real adventure."

"You mean I'll be on television reporting live from Dominica for CBS!"

Amid the ruins of their home they all break out in tears of joy to be saved from the worst of the storm.

"I'm not sure about that," replies Mr. Bane, "but you

nearly became a missing actor in a revised “Gone with the Wind”.

“I guess that’s what they call riding the storm,” says Sheila-Anne as she draws Roddy and Tarah towards her, pressing them to her breast.

THE END

A CHRISTMAS TALE

By Albert Williams

A huge star hung in the cold evening sky. A sacred stillness seemed to cling to everything, like some unseen web. She looked through the window and saw the Holy Family. The Christ Child lay asleep in a manger, while Mary his mother looked on. Joseph stood there beaming like an actor, his hands clasped in prayer. The three wise men were still there talking among themselves, and every now and then they would look at the Holy Child and nod their heads in agreement; cattle lowed softly in the shadows.

By now a number of other people had gathered round the shed and just as she was about to enter she heard the sound of bells ringing lightly. She peered into the darkness and saw a strange-looking man on a sledge drawn by a multitude of deer, one she noticed had a very, very red nose. As the ensemble grew closer she noticed that the man had on a funny looking red suit with white furry trimmings that matched his flowing white beard that jangled up and down as he merrily urged his team of jolly reindeers on. And as she looked pulling behind him

one huge tree, so tall that when he finally reached the stable, shepherds forbade him for fear that he would disturb the sleeping king.

Thereupon the gentle man alighted from his sleigh and immediately started for the circle of onlookers where the Magi, the Holy Family, the shepherds and others gazed in pure delight at the sight of the Saviour lying in a crib. He made his way in delicate steps and announced that his name was Nicholas and that he was from somewhere called Asia Minor, wherever that is, and that he was the patron saint of children rewarding the good ones, while punishing the bad ones. He said, "I too have heard about the birth of the Christ-Child, the Saviour of the world, and I have come to worship him." He genuflected before the spectacle, fully divine, fully human with an awesome reverence.

He arose and continued, "I have brought some gifts for the holy child, a poem." He pushed his hands into his pocket and drew forth a card on which was written a poem, and then as if by magic he produced a cardboard box in which he said was a seamlessly woven gown from the finest hemp that he would wear only when he would reach the age of thirty when his mission to save the world would begin. He displayed the long flowing gown one that I'd never seen.

"And this tree shall henceforth be called the Christmas Tree which shall be for an ensign among all peoples of the world through whom every man, woman and child will be blessed."

“And this tree,” he continued in his deep booming voice that sounded like the rumblings of distant thunder, “shall symbolize that he shall be like the Tree of Life planted by the rivers of water that bringest forth fruit in due season.”

The man laughed and laughed then took a deep bow before the babe sleeping in the manger on a heap of dried, banana leaves, unaware of the adoration being showered upon him. The messenger then said a few words to Joseph who turned as white as a sheet and almost as suddenly as he arrived, Nicholas disappeared into the night whistling a melody that was quite infectious as his reindeers galloped away in a delicate kind-of-a-way with little, silver bells strung along the side of the contraption ringing softly, softly until all that could be heard was the murmuring of the on-lookers and the howl of the cold, cold wind.

THE END